CUBA'S AGRARIAN REFORM

A SPEECH BY DR. FIDEL CASTRO

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INTRODUCTION

One of Canada's most widely read dailies recently carried an Associated Press story written by Joe McGowan Jr. with a caption over the article "Castro Concealed Nothing, Reporter Says." This A.P. story was like few of the A.P. stories I have read: it was worth reading! The suggestion is that the reporter was surprised that Castro concealed nothing, but the fact is that this is the very nature of the Castro leadership and the Cuban Revolution.

The daily press, and unfortunately the official labor press of this continent, has thrown a wall of secrecy and silence around the island with the result that the North American people are mislead as much by what is not said about Cuba as by what is said. For example, the major speeches of Cuba's leaders have never been published or even adequately reviewed by the daily or labor press.

Except for a few cryptic comments about it, North Americans know nothing about the following speech and the decisions made at the gathering of Cane *Co-operativistas* to which it was addressed. The decision of the Cane Co-operatives to become Peoples Farms or *Granjas* was taken by the *Co-operativistas* in a vote of 530 to 60. This procedure was in keeping with the profoundly democratic nature of the Cuban Revolution.

All of Fidel Castro's speeches are worth studying because of the wealth of information to be gained from them about Revolutionary Cuba. This speech is especially worthwhile because of the unusually informative nature of the speech, but even more worthwhile because it reveals the true leadership qualities of Fidel Castro and his profound hatred for all exploitative relationships. I have read all of the major speeches of the Cuban leader but this speech, more than any other, has given me a deep insight into the social revolutionary character of the man.

The massive and intense support given the leadership of Fidel Castro has been the object of much speculation by many people. In the main his "magnetic personality" has been explained by psychological factors inherent in the man. We are told by others that Fidel Castro is a demagogue with the capacity of Adolph Hitler. I submit that neither of these explanations describes the leader of Cuba's Revolution.

An understanding of the class nature of the Cuban Revolution and a consistent reading of Castro's talks to the Cuban people reveals the nature of the bond between Fidel and his people. Revealed also is the reason for the fanatical hatred and fear of Cuba's No. 1 leader which emanates from Washington and the mass media of this continent. The enemies of Cuba are not afraid that the Cuban people will lose their democratic rights under socialism. They are afraid rather of the great democratic traditions which the Cuban Revolution has established.

I am very happy that the Committee has found the resources to make this speech available to the English reading public.

VERNEL OLSON,
Chairman of the Fair Play for Cuba Committee

Cuba's Agrarian Reform

Speech given by Dr. Fidel Castro, Prime Minister and First Secretary of O.R.I., at the closing of the National Congress of Cane Co-Operatives, August 18, 1962.

Delegates: To our memory comes the history of the whole revolutionary process in our agriculture. This Congress which has just taken place has great importance for the Revolution, but perhaps its importance is not as obvious today as it will be in the years to come. I believe that this Congress represents a great step forward.

But it is necessary that all of you companeros, who work in the cane fields, understand clearly why this signifies a great step forward. First of all, we ought to explain the first steps that were taken in agriculture, and why they were taken.

All of you who work in the cane plantations have a very clear idea of what life was like in the countryside, above all on the cane plantations.

When the Revolution triumphed, it was a fact that the first step taken was the Agrarian Reform. You will remember when we began to speak of the Agrarian Reform, how immediately the people began to be interested, even the workers in the cities.

It is possible that many people heard of the Agrarian Reform, without, nevertheless, understanding what this signified. But finally everyone realized that the Reform was necessary, that the situation in the countryside could not remain, that a complete change was needed in the conditions of life, work and exploitation of the land, that such a change would be beneficial to the campesinos (farmers).

The Agrarian Reform is one of the most completed tasks which the Revolution set itself. It has also been one of the most difficult tasks. The problem of ownership and means of exploitation of the land is far more complex than the same problem in industry. The revolution, for example, of the system of industrial production is always much simpler than the revolution in the countryside.

In our countryside, two types of production centres existed: the large latifundios (plantations) and the small farmers. The large latifundios exploited a considerable number of workers, especially the large cane latifundios. Among the small farmers there were certain distinct characteristics. The small farmer who was the owner of land was in a minority. Then there were the squatters, the cultivators of coffee and cocoa in the mountains, who, although they did not pay rent, always lived under the threat of eviction. There was also the farmer who paid rent, who, together with the squatters, constituted the great majority.

We were, therefore, confronted with two types of ownership on

the land. There was the small farmer who worked his own land and there was the landlord who lived, in many cases, far from his lands and who employed at times hundreds of workers. The large latifundios like the United Fruit Co., employed thousands of workers.

The basic outlines of the first revolutionary law that changed the system of production in the countryside were as follows: first, the liquidation of the latifundios; second, the liquidation of the rent system, that is to say the liberation of the campesino from the rents that they were paying; third, to guarantee to the squatters the ownership of the land that they were occupying.

The problem remained of how to make the great latifundios productive. It was talked about a great deal, and it was on everybody's tongue in a period when we could aspire only to partial triumphs, to partial solutions. It was a period when we could not move forward with the Revolution on all fronts, but had to move in stages. In this period, much was said of the Agrarian Reform as simply a distributeon of the lands. Many people saw the Agrarian Reform as nothing more than the distribution of land.

Fortunately, our revolution had the good judgment and sufficient audacity to adopt a progressive system of exploitation of the land. Today that is very easy to understand.

Why We Didn't Divide the Latifundios

The division of the latifundios could have destroyed the Revolution. Dramatic problems would have resulted from the division of these lands. First of all there is the practical problem of dividing these lands since all the lands have distinct characteristics. Within any latifundio some land is more fertile than other, some is used for one thing, some for another. From the political point of view, the easiest solution would have been the division of those lands. From the practical point of view, this would have been an inferior solution. Often, that which at one moment appears easiest is in the long run not the best.

The results that would have followed the division of these lands, are understood by everyone. In the first place, there isn't enough land for everyone. We remember that when the agrarian law was proclaimed, someone suggested printed forms for those who wanted land. We realized then that such forms would have negative results. Why? Because everyone wanted land, even the people who lived in the cities.

If the latifundios had been divided, many workers would have been left without land or, on the other hand, the lots would have been too small for a family to subsist on.

Can you imagine, for example, a rice latifundio of one or two hundred caballerias planted in rice, divided among three or four hundred families? Naturally, each would take possession of his parcel of land and would build his house there. Besides rice, he

would wish to grow food and many other things. In any rice latifundio the system of irrigation requires the flooding of up to 30 caballerias, (one caballeria=33 acres) therefore we would have remained isolated like an island reef in the middle of flooded rice fields.

With sugar cane, more or less the same thing would have happened. With cattle it would have been even worse. The distribution of the cattle and the cattle ranches would have created one of the most serious problems of the Revolution.

First of all, it is hard to imagine the number of cattle that would have been sacrificed, especially with the present increase in the demand for meat. At the same time the demand for shoes has also increased considerably, and therefore an increase in the demand for leather.

We do not have the problem solved as yet, but we have created all the conditions for the resolution of these problems. Today there is considerably less meat than the people wish to buy. It is obvious that to satisfy this demand, we would have to sacrifice not only the fattened cattle, but also the cows and even the heifers and calves. In a word, if we were to kill all the cattle that the people today are able to buy, then in three or four years very few cattle would remain.

Another problem as a result of this policy would be a reduction in the number of hides available for the manufacture of footwear. You know about the difficulties in the production of footwear; nevertheless, only increased production will solve this problem. In this case the production of meat from large animals is tied closely to the production of footwear.

Imagine the situation if we were to dispose of half the cattle we have, and could not say like today, that year by year, we can kill so many cattle, which will supply so much leather for so many pairs of shoes.

But that is not all: We have a program for the development of the cattle herds through artificial insemination and through importation and selection of breeding stock.

To start a program of insemination and selection in a large centre where there are hundreds of thousands of cattle does not represent the same problems that would arise if there were tens or hundreds of thousands of small producers developing, for example, the beef herds. Also the breeding of hogs requires certain conditions; veterinarians, feeding houses, etc. It would be almost impossible to carry out a plan of rapid development where the land was divided into tens of thousands of farms, each with its own style, methods and ideas. It would be the same for any program of selection, of cultivation improvement, of irrigation. That is to say, production problems would represent an insurmountable situation.

We are not going to talk about other problems which are related to the agricultural workers, that is, to those who live in the country. If the latifundios had been divided, each one would have

built his own bohio on his own little piece of land; the school would have remained several kilometers from where the children live; the possibilities of electrification, suitable roads, sewage, recreation sites and shopping centres would not have been realised.

None of the many towns that have been built, that nevertheless are only a small part of what are really needed in the countryside, could have been realised either. The possibility of bringing the comforts of city life to the countryside would never have been possible, i.e., the large school centers, artistic and cultural activities, running water, electricity, sewage, streets; in a word, everything that is done in a small town would have been impossible in the countryside since such small towns can be built only when the land is cultivated collectively.

Besides this, the division of the land would have had other economic, political and social consequences. It is a fact that today there is a great demand for products, which, as a result of drought, poor administration and errors, agricultural production did not increase in proportion to the demand. We see, as a result, some speculation in agricultural products and more or less exorbitant prices.

Where does it occur and how does it happen? Why? Why does meat keep its price? Why do fowl, which are distributed in the cities, keep their price? Why do those staple articles not vary in price? Why do pork products keep their price? Why aren't three turkeys worth 50 pesos? Why don't they sell four chickens for 20 pesos in the cities? Why? Because those products come from the Granjas (Peoples Farms or State Farms). Because the beef which is used in the cities was raised on the Granjas! Because those fowl were raised on the Granjas! Because the agricultural products of the Granjas come to the towns and cities, to the workers, at reasonable and stable prices.

The Nation can count on those products because they go from the production centers to the distribution centers. What are the products which become objects of speculation? They are the products cultivated on the small isolated plots.

What happened, for example, to the malanga from "Rancho Mundito", in Pinar del Rio, malanga which was sown with loans given by the Revolution, on land which was distributed by the Revolution? The campesinos made use of the credits; they sowed and they produced, but what happened then? The Revolutionary Government, in order to avoid annoyances for the independent producers, authorized the campesinos to sell on the open market. What happened? Everyone with a car and money went to "Rancho Mundito" to buy malanga; some for their own use, others for purposes of speculation.

The result was that the area which supplied malanga for the children of the city of Havana, sold in a single Sunday 300,000 lbs. of malanga, directly, to the people from the city; that is, enough malanga for the children of Havana for several days.

And what was the result of this? The person who went with his

car and bought a hundred weight of malanga, was assured of the supply for his children, his own children, for several weeks. The speculator, who gained by reselling, forced families, who could find no malanga on the store shelves, to pay three or four times the regular price. And the children of families who had no car and who could not afford to pay three or four times the regular price had to go without.

In the face of shortages, the speculator was always present, offering much higher prices and creating difficulties for the whole population. What is even worse, the speculator was corrupting the campesino, awakening excessive ambitions, ambitions which they are not able to satisfy without causing suffering for the rest of the citizens. No individual in society can disregard the needs of others; no one can disregard others.

Anyone, then, who lives at the expense of others is acting in an anti-social and unjust way. He forgets that he needs others because the one who produces a specific crop and wishes to sell for ten times the proper price, would not like, for example, to smoke a cigar that cost him ten times more than the regular price. He would not like to pay ten times more for shoes and clothing than is just; nor would he like it if the kerosene or the medicine which he gets or the rice, beans, salt, sugar, the thousand products which he needs to live, cost him ten times more than they should. If we forget this, we forget, in short, that we all work for others and we all need the work of others.

Who Benefits from Speculation?

So we see that within society articles of every type are needed—how even here at this gathering, we need electric lights and the chairs on which you are sitting. There were workers, carpenters, decorators, who organized all this. The clothes that you wear, the shoes, the room where you sleep, the meals they serve you, the trains in which you travel: they are products of the work of others. We would not have light; we would not have telephones; we would not have transportation, gasoline, clothing or shoes if each one kept what he produced. We would have no medicine, no teachers, no doctors, no mail. We would have practically nothing because it is an elemental truth that we are all dependent on the work of others. If someone receives ten times the just price for something he produces, then he is stealing from others.

Anyone who wishes to sell an article for ten times what it costs to produce, and to buy what he uses for a just price, cannot do so without robbing the rest of the citizens. And when a bourgeois from the city comes in his automobile and offers a campensino for a hundred pounds of malanga, not $4, which is the proper price, more or less, a price which is in line with what others workers can pay for the article, but offers him $10 for the hundred weight, the bourgeois corrupts the campesino with a price three or four times

more than he thought was possible. He does this calmly, like a person doing the right thing, because he has the right to sell that food for $10 or even $15; or he goes to the highway and sells three turkeys for $50.

The campesino does not understand these things. In his lifetime he has been concerned only with the accumulation of money, because he lived in a society where money was everything. And who are the ones who eat this high priced food? Who are the ones who eat fried turkey? The rich! The bourgeois in the cities! (applause)

When an 80 lb. pig sells for $80, what worker can afford to buy pork? The worker who earns only $80 or $100 per month, so that sugar, salt and meat can be produced cheaply for the whole Nation, that worker cannot eat pork or turkey, his children cannot eat malange simply because only the ones who have cars and who have large incomes or profits, and who besides, produce absolutely nothing, can go to the countryside.

I think that everyone here understands these things, especially you workers who have worked all your lives! You understand these things perfectly! (applause)

The result! The rich who remain, live well; but this is not the worst. They sow greed, ambition, corruption and demoralization among the small farmers. The small farmer is a humble man who is a worker, not a parasite. But the parasite cannot be a parasite if, along the way, he is not fulfilling acts of parasitism, sowing parasitism and creating parasites where ever he goes. He is not satisfied with being a parasite; he must convert the campesino into a parasite also. (applause)

All this does not happen on a Granja. With all the deficiencies, with all the errors, with all the things badly done, this does not happen on a Granja. If there are caballerias of malanga, no bourgeois is allowed to come and offer $10 a hundred weight. (applause) No speculator can go there to buy at a higher price in order afterwards to rob the workers. The people can count on the 10 caballerias there; all the children can count on a just price. (applause)

In the same way, the worker of that farm has the right to buy industrial products at a just price: cigars, tobacco, all the food which is not produced on that farm; clothing, shoes, medicines, transportation, everything is sold to him at a fair price.

I have enumerated, therefore some distinct consequences. If the latifundios had been divided, not only would production have dropped in a significant way, but we would have been left without a base to develop our agricultural economy rapidly. We would not have been able to reduce unemployment in the country. Not only that; the staple commodities would have been in short supply and speculation would have been rampant.

Another thing is also very clear: It is common for a Granja in the Havana area to produce, with hundreds of workers, 1,000 or

2,000 litres of milk. We can say with all certainty that if this milk were sold on the open market, then the people of Havana would not be assured of a supply of milk. But all this milk should not be consumed on the farm; the remainder must be used by the rest of the population, by the workers and their families who live in the cities. All the milk is not consumed on the farm; part of it is distributed and the farm worker reasons "that milk is lacking in the city, we cannot leave the city without milk." This could not be done if the latifundios had been divided, because the private producer first consumes all that he needs. After he has satisfied his own needs he sells the surplus to the highest bidder, because—imagine—he still does not understand his social obligations; the products are in their hands.

I do not wish to go into detail at this time, for example, of the problem of sending thousands of young people to study in the Soviet Union. It is much easier to make arrangements with Granjas or Co-operatives than with 600 individual farmers. (applause)

Rural Unemployment Liquidated

From every point of view, and today we see it with total clarity, it was a great thing, a great step, when the Revolution turned the latifundios into collective centres of production; in spite of all the difficulties, all the deficiencies at every turn, it was a great step.

You know that rural unemployment has been liquidated. You know that the problem now is a shortage of labor in many parts of the country. (applause) You know now all that, know that you no longer have to seize the "matulito," the "saquito" (small bag containing earthly belongings), carrying in your arms and taking by the hand your starving children—to go picking coffee, (applause) or to emigrate to far away places, or to look for a political boss who could hand out a public works job, or who would buy your electoral ballot to be cast for some shameless politician. (applause) Now it is not necessary to do that.

For that reason, those campesinos who, like yourselves, came from the latifundios, went as squatters into the precarious mountains to sow coffee. The coffee was cultivated in the mountains because the cane and cattle latifundios devoured all the good land, and were not interested in coffee. If there is coffee in Cuba today it is thanks to those campensinos, who, during the "dead period" (when there was no work in the cane fields) when thousands of workers were hungry, scaled the mountains: thanks to them there is coffee.

This coffee, which was in remote places, could be picked because there were tens and hundreds of thousands of men in the countryside who were out of work.

When the Revolution came and resolved the fundamental problem of unemployment in the countryside, resolved it because it

neither distributed nor divided those latifundios, thereby permitting the mechanization of agriculture, the Revolution now has another problem: who picks the coffee?

But the Revolution finds solutions for everything, (applause) because the Revolution by its own deeds draws upon fresh forces; by its own deeds finds new resources and like the workings of the Revolution, itself is an extraordinary development. Tens and tens of thousands of young people are studying, their entire expenses are paid by the Nation. The Revolution mobilizes these young people, mobilizes their energy—the same as it mobilized them when they went to teach in the mountains—and resolves the problems with their resources and group energy. (applause)

For this reason, the campesinos are not left now with no one to pick their coffee. They don't have to worry because their brothers have now work on the prairies, because the Revolution finds solutions for the problems of all. The campensino should not complain about the good fortune of his brothers, because he *will* have someone to pick the coffee.

Thus we see that despite the many shortages, and they are many, something has been done, changes have been made. As we look back on our difficulties and errors, we must apply new means. We are not yet beginning to ascend, but already we have walked part way up hill. We do not now have the problems of the first days, the problems there were in the beginning. There are problems, yes, but problems that correspond to a stage where we have overcome many of the past evils.

Co-operatives and State Farms

How did we go about organizing production in the countryside? What did we do? The latifundios were not divided, but collective centers of production were established. Two types appeared; the co-operatives in the cane fields, and Granjas in the cattle and rice latifundios, and on the virgin lands.

The Revolution took a bold step when it did not distribute the latifundios. The two types of collective agricultural organization, the co-operative and the Granja, have been marching side by side.

From the cane latifundios, more than 600 Cane Cooperatives have been organized. From the cattle latifundios and virgin lands, more than 300 Granjas have been organized or constructed.

You all know, companeros, how much interest we have shown, the meetings that have been held, the courage we have demonstrated in trying to advance the co-operatives. Who here is not aware of the initiative that was shown in placing a dairy in each co-operative, the credits that were given, the improvements that were planned, the towns, the solution of the housing problem?

Naturally, many of these things were impossible to solve in such a brief space of time, such as the problem of housing.

Many courses have been organized to produce mechanics, agricultural technicians. You know that there is not a single co-operative where many young people have not gone away to study.

These two parallel systems have been subjected to the test of reality. The co-operative is a collective centre distinct from the Granja: the Granja is like a factory, the farmer is like a worker in a factory; the co-operative worker is like a member of a group of workers who works for his own benefit and not for the benefit of the Nation.

It is logical that the bookkeeping of the one type would be different from the other. If the co-operative worker works for his own benefit, then he receives only the land free; not the investments. The investment, the machinery must be paid for. Housing must also be his own responsibility. If the product is going to be his, the instruments of production, the investments, the housing, all must be paid for.

The case of the worker on the Granja is different. In the first place, the machinery, the investments, do not have to be paid for by him. But there is something more: the Revolution decided that housing would not have to be paid for either, nor electricity and water.

Now we see the difference. Because the worker on the Granja works for the benefit of the Nation, he has the right to receive the instruments of production as well as all the possible benefits that the Nation can give. Not so with the co-operative worker: for him there must be a chargé.

During the initial stages of building the co-operative centres, therefore, credit was required for the construction of the towns. Many years of work will be required to pay for the investments, the machinery, the housing. Naturally, if this is not accompanied by high productivity, and if the people live well in the meantime, then many years will be required to pay for everything. How long, it cannot be known precisely.

It was logical also, on the other hand, that if the state imported 10,000 head of milk-producing cattle, they would not take them to the co-operative, but would take them rather to the Granjas, where the products are for the whole Nation. If we import 20,000 hogs, they too must be taken to the Granjas. Equipment for artificial insemination of cattle and special seeds must first be taken to the Granjas. If we introduce new techniques, such as hybrid corn, they must first go to the Granjas. We could even say that the workers on the Granjas should be the first to get houses, because they work for the Nation as a whole while the co-operative worker works for his own benefit. (applause)

But there was also another problem which we did not have on the Granja. Those who worked on the Granjas were workers who did not exploit anyone. Everyone was equal. But on the co-operatives, a problem existed, where a determined number of people

were co-operativistas (members of the co-operative who shared in the profits). Others, what were they? Second class citizen-workers; marginal ones. They were nothing. Since they were not co-operativistas they were workers and the co-operativistas were employers. (applause) When profits were distributed, they received nothing. The co-operativistas got the first houses and other advantages.

Since agriculture requires more labor at certain times of the year than at others, it is sad to think that the rural worker now is similar to the martyrs of the pre-revolutionary period of exploitation. The Revolution came, and although things are much better now than what they had been, nevertheless, this situation is hard to accept with resignation.

There remained in the countryside, an outcast, who was not a co-operativista, who was nothing. Why? Because he had that shame, he was different from others. Nevertheless his needs were the same as the others, the same preoccupations, therefore he ought to have the same rights. (applause)

It is true that although a great step forward had been made, that forward step did not correspond entirely to the Revolution's idea of justice.

Who had suddenly become, at times, a semi-exploiter of the work of others? Old workers! A contradiction exists here: the latifundio has been liquidated and this is a great forward step. But at the same time a group of proletarians, one of the most combative, most inured to war and most revolutionary—as was the cane worker—have lost their position as proletrians. The Revolution was taking a backward step.

And where were the agricultural workers who were the most revolutionary, the most long suffering, the best fighters? They were not on the cattle latifundios, managed by a few laborers. Traditionally, the group with the best fighting spirit, the most revolutionary of the agricultural proletariat, was the cane worker, the workers of the cane latifundios. When the Revolution was becoming more proletarian; when the country moved forward to the great moment when its destiny was not in the hands of the bourgeois exploiters, nor of the imperialist filibusters; at the moment when the proletariat began to guide the destiny of the country, a great proletarian and exploited group of yesterday ceased being proletarian. (applause)

For you, companeros—although the co-operative was a forward step over the past, more just than the latifundios, a forward step for the Nation—for you, from the point of view of your class, for you from the point of view of historical importance, taking into account the class that you belong to, for you the co-operative was a backward step.

I am sure that in the mind of each one of you is indelibly engraved all of the past—the past—of leaders, of rural guards, of unscrupulous politicians, of gamblers, of boliteros (private lottery

owners), of grafters of every type. You who have deeply engraved in your mind the memory of that hungry past, the past of suffering and humiliated workers, you would not have thought that the day would come when your children would study in university or in foreign lands. How could a worker have thought of becoming an administrator, of coming to the capital to discuss problems, those who are sent by their place of work, (applause) to discuss with the Ministers, with the Government, to express their opinions, to participate actively in the affairs of the country? You who remember that past, I am sure, if you were asked to renounce your position as proletarians to become semi-exploiters, I am sure that you would all say: "No, we will not renounce our proletarian position. We now, more than ever, wish to be proletarians, because in our hands is the destiny of our country. We wish to change it into a better world, without exploiters or exploited of any kind." (applause)

That, companeros, is the way we must think. To be a proletarian is an honour and title above any others in our society; more than material advantages you may be able to acquire.

Yesterday it was the owner of the latifundio; yesterday the Yankee was the boss and made the "rendez-vous" every day. Today, the highest honour, the master of our country, is not the Yankee, nor is it the landlord exploiter. It is the proletarian! (applause)

The co-operatives have fulfilled their usefulness. They had deficiencies, great deficiencies. Each of the two types of production has been tested. Is it not correct to take one more forward step, a step that will bring together all the workers of the countryside, the workers of the Granjas and you (co-operativistas), bringing together you and those who work with you in the cane fields but who are not co-operativistas?

Agricultural Working Class Advance

With this step, the agricultural proletariat begins to advance, becomes the most numerous sector of the working class in our country—great in size, number and importance—because altogether, on the co-operatives and on the Granjas, there are more than 250,000. With this step, the Revolution will have 250,000 rural proletarians, (applause) a great and formidable force for the Revolution.

When the small independent farmer unites in order to produce more economically, he advances. For that reason, the true co-operative is one which is formed from independent producers who are not proletarians. (applause) The small farmer is the one who is attached to the land, to his small plot of ground. He has a feeling of ownership that the proletariat does not have. That (the land) is his world; he does not have the advanced mentality of the proletariat. When he joins with others, that is a forward step for him and for the Revolution.

Nearly 300 Agricultural Societies of Farmers, have been created, resulting in the joining of lands. (applause)

Now this is a very complex problem, because the campesino does not have the same mentality as he who has been, or is, a worker. The campesino has a different outlook: he does not have the same level of culture, above all of political consciousness, which the worker has. It is necessary to march with the campesino, who is an ally of the working class. We must go to the campesino, each time raising his consciousness, each time making him more revolutionary, each time more advanced. For this, it is necessary to have a correct policy. With proper leadership, the campesino will move spontaneously toward superior forms of production. The campesino cannot be socialized or co-operativized by force or compulsion.

Neither by Force nor Compulsion

No, that campesino must be allowed to develop little by little until, of necessity, there will no longer be any workers looking for a boss. When the Granjas encompass all labour, then the yoke of oxen will not do. It will be necessary to mechanize everything; then the campesino will see that by uniting forces with other campesinos he will have more strength, more possibilities and will be able to produce more. Then he will march forward.

The day will come when no one will want to work for a boss. (applause) That day will arrive as it is now arriving, as it is now a reality in many places, when all farmers will move toward the Granjas, to remunerative work and to all the benefits of the Granja. Not the Granja of today, because we still lack an infinite number of things. Now there are many problems to solve, even such elemental ones as housing. No, the centres which are now being created, the communities, the towns which the campesinos will have, the life in these communities will, in every way, be comparable to life in the cities.

Here, today, some agricultural workers in this theatre (where the Congress was being held), entertained us with their songs and with their artistic achievements. Thousands of instructors are being trained now to make these possibilities a reality on the Granjas, and in the countryside, where life is isolated, tedious, often boring. They will organize the life of the future where highly productive work will alternate with many other pleasant things which will make the life of our campesinos much better: a healthy, happy life, a life of work, healthy diversions, sports and recreation.

The day will come when lamps will no longer be used; the day will come when many of the things that are seen now only in the cities, will be seen on the farms as well. And that day is not so far off, not so far that you will not see it. (applause)

That is what we must think about, because that is what we must struggle for. Not now, now in the pale shadow of the future, although life today is much better than in the past, but tomorrow, a tomorrow which is not far off.

Think where we would be today, if this could have been said 40 or 60 years ago when the Republic was born. Then the Revolution would not have had to dedicate a whole year to the problem of a million illiterates. Our countryside would now be full of riches, of comfort and conveniences.

It is clear that we Cubans were not ready for this 60 years ago, and for that reason we have these problems today. Nevertheless, we can now say: we are beginning! For this reason we will have in the future what we do not have today, what the previous generations could not do for us. (applause)

Is this, or is this not, the way a people ought to think? Is it, or is it not, the way everyone ought to think? (affirmative exclamations) You know that these are not simple words; you know it because now, in your children, you see that which you would have liked to have when you were children. There are many of you who say: "What wouldn't I give to be your age today; the opportunities that you now have which I did not have!" (applause)

When parents who could not even go to school—who walked barefoot; who perhaps even saw a little brother left to die, without a doctor, without help—when they look at their children with hope, and above all with assurance as you all do, without a soul who could hesitate or doubt it, what parent today doesn't think that his child has a secure future? What parent today doesn't know that his child will have a very different future from the one he had? (applause) What parent doesn't know that his child will become all that he wishes, that he will reach the highest places in skills, in culture and in work, and that all opportunities will be open to him. Now there is no longer even the fear that so many parents have when they ask "what will become of my children if I lose my life?", because they know those worries are a thing of the past.

Thousands of young campesinos are now studying: if there are not more in our Institutes, in our Technical Schools, in our Universities, it is simply because most campesinos did not go beyond second or third grade. That is why there are not more campesinos in the secondary grades; that is why there are not more campesinos in the Universities. (applause) Nevertheless, soon it will not be like this, because soon he will be able to go as far in school as he wishes.

And if there are not enough teachers . . . I can now say that the appeal made by the Revolutionary Government for 4,500 students for the Pre-Vocational School of Minas del Frio has met with a response of 8000 applications. (applause)

Although our schools might have deficiencies, teachers deficient in some case and even teachers who do not teach, it will not be

this way in the future, because everything is being built from the ground up. And although there are not thousands of young people from the countryside in our Universities there are thousands of young agricultural workers studying. And this year, in the next few weeks, we will have 2,000 students in the Soviet Union (applause) studying problems of administration, of machinery, of agricultural technique, and 3,500 studying problems of administration in the capital.

Therefore, these 5,500 students added to other schools of this type, which were already functioning, form a total of 6,000 young farm laborers. If we add the School of Insemination, the School of Revolutionary Instruction, and the Young Campesinas (farm girls) to this figure, this makes a contingent of more than 10,000 young campesinos. That is, 10,000 young people coming from the centers of the Granjas and from the old Cane Co-operatives. Ten thousand!

This gives you some idea of how opportunities are opening up everywhere for a young worker to become a technician, for a young worker to become a director of an agricultural enterprise; that now it is not the Yankee master, nor the exploiting landowner, but the young who have merit and capability. Because if there is something that we ought to understand, it is the necessity to form competent examples, to shape men, so that they will not fall into our errors and incur our faults.

What is it? You know! If there have been many faults, many errors, what other way is there to overcome them? No one is born with knowledge, and many men who were called upon to do a certain job that they were not able to do, were not even able to say that they did not know.

And the guilt, we ourselves cannot brush aside either, because we ourselves are guilty. (applause) If within the next few years there are no perfectly capable and competent men, then we ourselves must accept the blame. But the guilt will not fall on us, because we know what we are doing. We know that in the future we will not have the difficulties, we will not lack the elementary things that we lack today.

Today, it is the bitter gift of hard work, suffering and patience, which requires all the fortitude of revolutionaries, encouraged by a tomorrow which we know will be very different (applause), when the masses of young people, truly prepared, become part of the task, become part of the force.

Tomorrow there may be other problems, corresponding to new stages of progress. All that is lacking today, will be abundant tomorrow. But it is not a question of days, nor of weeks nor of months. It is a question of years!

Of course we all wish that tomorrow were here; we all wish it immediately, but nothing like that happens in real life. The seed does not bud sooner by wishing. It always takes years. Thus as the

parents look at their children, at the little ones recently born, they are not impatient. They care for him, knowing that some day they will have a man in the family. Thus also with the faith that we have, that work today (applause), the work of looking after the Revolution, will create tens of thousands, hundreds of thousands, yes millions of new men to the family of Cuba. (applause)

Only With Work and Sacrifice

There are many things about which we ought to think seriously and responsibly. There are many evils, defects, vices against which we still must struggle, in order to merit a better future, which can be accomplished only by sacrifice. We will not accomplish it by sleeping in the shade; we will not accomplish it if we are like vagabonds or loafers. Abundance of all that we wish, of all that we need, can be attained only with sweat, with work and with sacrifice. (applause)

For that reason, companeros, we must take the spirit of the Revolution and of truth, to all the workers of our country. We must make them conscious of the duty of work, and that work is not a punishment, but a necessity in the life of man. That which makes a man a man, and distinguishes him from the others, (applause) and makes him lord and master of nature, is work.

The vagabonds do not progress. The vagabonds will never help us to liberate ourselves from want and misery. For that reason, it is necessary to create a devotion to work; to see work as it is and not as a punishment. In the past, work was an instrument of exploitation of man. Today, it is an instrument of the redemption of man, of the elevation of man, of the progress of man. (applause)

We know that there are many things to overcome, many deficiencies, many things which grieve us, errors which grieve us, weaknesses which grieve us, carelessness which grieve us, as, for example, uncultivated lands and shortages of agricultural products caused by carelessness, because those in the front line have not been attentive, have not listened, have not paid attention to plans.

With an attentive eye on all problems, we fight to conquer them the way we resolve the problems of supplies, without stepping backwards. We use as an example the problem of the supplies of those products themselves. We have thought much about this problem and have discussed what should be done. Should we give a plot of land? No! Because he who has a small plot wishes a larger plot later; his animals multiply and he no longer has three, he has 10 or 20 or 50, and the worker turns up as a latifundista, because every herdsman must have pasture for his particular herd. (applause) No! We must not use those methods which encourage the abandonment of the obligations of work. We must not go to individualism which encourages egotism, which encourages inequalities among men; we must go to the collective. . . .

How do we resolve the problem of housing? It is impossible, now, to build houses for all. It is necessary then, in order to resolve this problem; not to be too ambitious, and spend whatever we can to resolve the problem of a place to live at least, even though that dwelling is not as good as the houses being constructed in the towns, because the housing problem cannot be solved in one year.

Each and every one of those problems must be looked after. But how? By thinking of the future, thinking of the interests of the Nation, thinking of the interests of all the workers. This is how we must think, because if we are all dependent on others, if no one can depend only on himself, then we must always think of the interests of all. (applause) If one concerns himself not only with his own needs, but with the needs of others, then others will look out for the needs of the individual. (applause)

Thus we must discuss, not with orders and commands, but with reason and truth. Because faced with the truth, faced with what is reasonable, no one can oppose; faced with what is just, no one can be opposed. Always with reason, always with what is just, always discussing, always teaching, never imposing, but persuading, with you participating.

From among you must come your union leaders. Now, at last, we can reply to the question which has been asked many times: "Why don't we have a union?" Indeed, you will have unions; your union leaders (applause), the Technical Advisory Councils will come from among you. In the future, more and more of you will become leaders. And finally, from you, from the mass of the proletariat, will come those who will advance the countryside. You will display the maximum interest, responsibility, feeling of duty, patriotism; thinking of the nation, thinking of our great people, who united must march forward, who united must conquer their future. (applause) Thus each time more aware of our social debts; each time less egotistic; each time more brotherly; each time more stripped of the dead weight, of the vices, of the past, to continue adapting our thinking and our actions to the present and to the future. . . .

We trust in you, cane workers; we trust in the revolutionary spirit of that great mass. We know that you will put forth the maximum effort in the face of the present difficulties. (applause) We know that you will assert yourself in the face of weakness, the spirit of laziness and those who do not feel a sense of duty, those who do not understand the great truth: that work is the most honourable activity of man, the most fundamental necessity of man; that work makes men out of us. (applause)

Let us work for all, so that all will work for each one of us.

Our Country or Death!
We Will Win!

Printed in Canada January, 1963 23

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